

4 MAR. 1897

Annual Report

OF

MEDICAL OFFICER OF HEALTH, FOR THE YEAR 1896,

In the Urban Sanitary District of Grays.

DURING the year there were registered 432 births, giving a birth-rate of 32 per thousand ; and 183 deaths, giving a death-rate of 13·9. These figures are based on an estimated population of 13,500. The birth and death-rates respectively for all England and Wales for 1896 are 29·7 and 17·1 per thousand. For a district of this kind the birth-rate is somewhat low, but the death-rate it will be seen contrasts very favourably. The infant mortality, i.e., the proportion of deaths under one year to 1000 born is 141·2, this is considerably lower than that for all England and Wales which averages 177, and testifies not only to the general health of the population but also to the care and attention paid to their offspring by the mothers of the district, who are only very exceptionally workers in factories, &c.

The Zymotic death-rate, that is the death-rate from the principal Zymotic Diseases, viz., Small-pox, Measles, Diphtheria, Scarlatina, Whooping-cough, Typhoid, and Diarrhoea, is 2 per thousand, while that of all England and Wales is 2·18 per thousand. Of these Zymotic diseases, Diphtheria is responsible for only one death, Typhoid for four deaths, Whooping-cough four deaths, while Measles, that supposed harmless infantile complaint, has been responsible for 17 deaths.

Injuries caused nine deaths, while 26 persons reached over the age of 65 years.

Only a single case of Puerperal Fever has occurred during the year.

With the exception therefore of Measles, which has claimed a very heavy death-toll, but which may be said to be at present outside the control of the Health Authorities, the lightness of the fatal cases of Infectious Diseases is very satisfactory and this applies especially to Diphtheria when compared with the heavy mortality in this district a few years ago from this disease. In my report for the year 1892, while commenting on the number of deaths from Measles, I pointed out that the complaint tends to become epidemic every second year; this has been shown practically in Grays by the outbreaks which have occurred in '90, '92, '94 and '96. The question of the closure of the schools of course occurred to me in connection with the outbreak of Measles. But it so happened that the worst of the outbreak was occurring, so far as I was enabled to judge, shortly before the summer vacation, and moreover the closure of schools in a neighbourhood where children congregate thickly together does not always effect its purpose, being indeed more useful in districts where the scholars are gathered together from scattered hamlets. But in a district of this kind because they do not meet at school it by no means follows that they do not meet at play when infection can be carried.

We removed to the Infectious Hospital five cases of Small-pox and three cases of Scarlatina. The latter cases occurred in one family, that of a schoolmaster residing at the schools. They were promptly removed and disinfection carried out with the happiest results, no cases arising therefrom.

During the year, practically the whole of the Sanitary district has been inspected by the Sanitary Inspector and by myself.

The Sewage disposal works have been in operation since November, 1894, and up to the present have worked satisfactorily.

The Surveyor informs me that nearly 1,900 houses and all the schools in the district are now connected with the sewage system and the average daily dry-weather-flow is about 130,000 gallons. Alumino-ferric sulphate and lime have continued to be employed as the precipitant during 1896 and a good effluent has been obtained. A difficulty however may possibly arise as to the ultimate disposal of the sludge. This is now dried by exposure to the atmosphere on beds of ashes underdrained with agricultural pipes. Hitherto it has been sold by contract to farmers in the neighbourhood and removed by them from the works. The contract having expired however, a recent advertisement for further tenders met with no response. This is probably due to the difficulties experienced in wet weather, the very large percentage of moisture which it then contains materially increasing its bulk.

Sixteen houses were closed during the year, two in High Street, four in Quaker Square, and 10 Whitehall Cottages, these have all been permanently closed, having been pulled down. In Quaker Square some stinking privies were at the same time abolished.

I have to bring before you the case of the premises in High Street in which the following conditions were found: no ventilation at all to the drains, an indoor upstairs closet disused and so without its proper seal of water acting as the highest point for ventilation, the soil pipe from the w.c. coming down inside the house and the drain passing under the kitchen floor. On the refusal of the occupier to abate these nuisances, the case was brought before the Bench. In spite of my very emphatic opinion as to the danger of such a condition, the Bench ruled that there was not sufficient evidence to convict. It will be however a satisfaction to the Council to know that the ventilation has since been carried out by the occupier practically fulfilling the conditions wished for by the Council.

It comes within my province, although the District Council is not at present the Vaccination Authority, to record the fact that a large proportion of infants are now escaping being vaccinated. I greatly regret that the report of the Royal Commission on Vaccination, which was issued during the year, was so weak and uncertain. The gist of their report was: yes, there is no doubt as to the efficacy of vaccination as a protection against Small-pox, and that the drawbacks to vaccination are so slight that they may be disregarded, but still don't try to enforce it lest you stir up feeling against it. In consequence of the neglect of vaccination (due largely to this report), the next time that Small-pox visits Grays it will find more material to work on and the Council will find, although they have had no part in the neglect of the precaution against the disease, that their work and expenses will be thereby greatly increased.

The area of the district is 1,382 acres; there are 10 persons to each acre and 6.2 to each inhabited house.

The water is supplied by the South Essex Waterworks Company, and it is very hard. The supply has been more or less constant, but for some months the water was cut off early in the evening and not turned on again till morning. No good reason was assigned for this action on the part of the Water Company, which caused much trouble and bother.

No special injury to health seems to arise from the occupations of the Grays Working Classes. Those employed in the cement factories do not suffer from phthisis in any augmented degrees. Women are not much employed, save in the fields for a part of the year.

There are about 1,500 w.c.'s, most of which are supplied with water; the opportunity is taken of connection with the system to insist on the presence of a proper water supply.

Galvanised iron receptacles are in general use for refuse, which is collected by the Council themselves.

The Burial Ground is about one mile from the town, the old burial ground being only occasionally used.

Slaughter-houses are all in very good condition, and the same may be said of Dairies and Cowsheds.

The Lodging-house is not registered but has been regularly inspected. Its sanitary arrangements have recently been overhauled, and w.c.'s, urinals, &c., altered and the house is now in good condition.

Two Bakehouses have been cleansed after inspection by me; no underground bake-houses exist.

There are no cellar dwellings in Grays.

The Hospital accommodation for Infectious cases (our patients being taken by the Orsett Sanitary Authority) has proved successful so far. As will be seen from table B eight persons were removed. In no case was compulsion resorted to.

The Sanitary Staff consists of a Surveyor and a Sanitary Inspector; the latter calls at my house daily for instructions and also attends at his office at certain hours for the supply of disinfectant, &c.

Disinfection has been accomplished by means of sulphur dioxide, or in bad cases with chlorine gas. Corrosive sublimate disinfectant (to be used in the strength of 1 in 1,000) has been supplied gratuitously by the Authority for use at infectious cases, on application being made through either the Sanitary Inspector or myself.

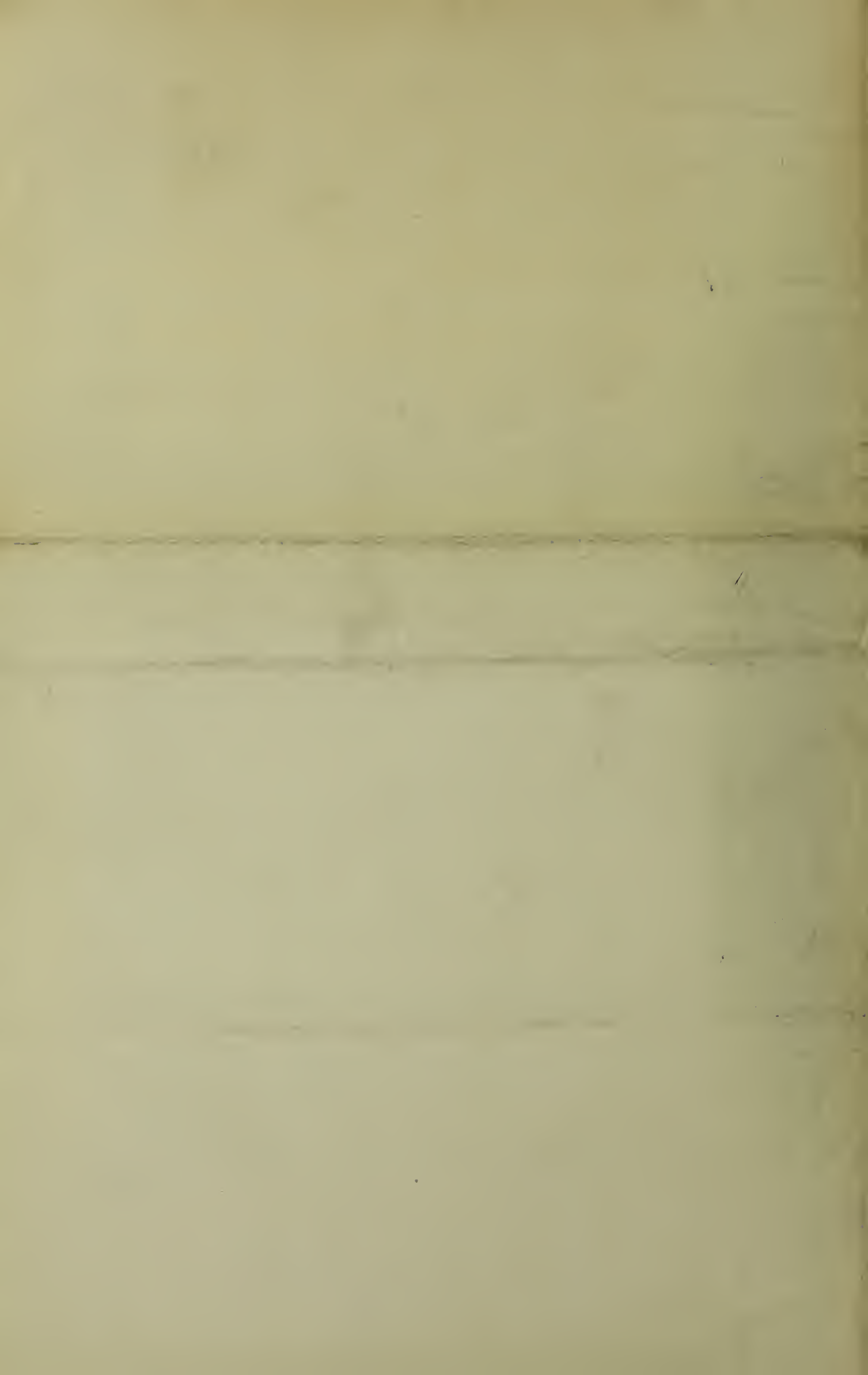
There is however one nuisance which arises from time to time, viz., that caused by the unloading of foreign animals' dung from barges at the Town Wharf and subsequent cartage through Grays to distant farms. This manure emits a very offensive and foul odour, and although no proof of specific disease has been shown to arise from it, nevertheless it constitutes a real nuisance, detrimental to health. The Council have power to deal with the cartage under bye-law 4, and insist on its being entirely covered with a tarpaulin or other sufficient covering. With regard to the unloading at the Town Wharf the District Council have power to prohibit the unloading of filth emitting a stench (and this manure at times certainly comes under this heading). While reserving the exercise of this power at any time the Council are not at present disposed to prohibit its landing if proper precautions, such as covering with sufficient lime and attending to bye-law 4 when carting is carried out. As foreign animals' dung it is under the control of the County Council, but the regulations of the County Council on the subject are openly disregarded.

No difficulties have arisen during the past year in connexion with offensive trades. In one or two cases complaints have been made as to effluvia from fish frying, but a few suggestions as to the method of carrying on have met the cases.

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(A)

TABLE OF DEATHS

During the year 1896, classified according to Diseases and Ages.

MORTALITY FROM ALL CAUSES, AT SUBJOINED AGES.								MORTALITY FROM SUBJOINED CAUSES, DISTINGUISHING DEATHS OF CHILDREN UNDER FIVE YEARS OF AGE.												
(a)	(b)	(c)	(d)	(e)	(f)	(g)	(h)	(i)	Smallpox	Scarlatina	Diphtheria	Typhus Fevers	Puerperal Fever	Measles	Whooping Cough	Phthisis	Heart Disease	Injuries	All other Diseases	Total
	At all ages.	Under 1 year	1 and under 5	5 and under 15	15 and under 25	25 and under 65	65 and upwards	Under 5 5 upwards			1	3	1	16	6	30	1	3	34	
GRAYS	188	61	30	12	13	46	26													
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...																				
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(B)

TABLE

Of Population, Births, and of New Cases of Infectious Sickness during 1896.

	POPULATION AT ALL AGES.			Registered Births	Aged under 5 or over 5	NEW CASES OF SICKNESS IN EACH LOCALITY COMING TO THE KNOWLEDGE OF THE MEDICAL OFFICER OF HEALTH.								REMOVED FROM THEIR HOMES FOR TREATMENT IN ISOLATION HOSPITAL.		
	Census, 1891	Estimated to middle of 1896	(a)			(b)	(c)	(d)	(e)	Smallpox	Scarlatina	Diphtheria	Membranous Croup	Enteric or Typhoid	Puerperal Fever	Erysipelas
GRAYS	12,087	13,500	432	*	7	44	42	11	10	1	35		5	3		
T.S.'s, SHAFTESBURY and EXMOUTH ...																

* No Information is supplied to me concerning Ages.

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Medical Officer of Health.

